



Travel Industry Update

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American Airlines And Lufthansa Look To Preflight Testing To Protect Passengers From Coronavirus

- Both Lufthansa, which has opened four preflight testing centers in Germany, and American Airlines are exploring whether to offer preflight testing in the U.S., ramping up efforts to protect passengers from Covid-19.
- In partnership with Centogene, a German company that provides genetic testing for disease, Germany's largest airline utilizes preflight testing centers at airports in Frankfurt, Munich, Hamburg and Dusseldorf. The Dusseldorf facility opened Wednesday.
- Meanwhile, American has asked for proposals from 150 rapid testing providers, Alison Taylor, American chief customer officer, said Wednesday during a World Aviation Festival panel.
- "We are looking seriously at rapid testing as we explore options for boosting confidence in air travel," said American spokeswoman Martha Thomas in an email. "We are constantly looking at ways to upgrade our Clean Commitment to give customers more peace of mind when they travel with us."
- Lufthansa is working to upgrade its testing capability and also to be able to offer testing at airports in Canada, the U.S. and China. The carrier is "trying to build up travel corridors, with testing on both ends, with China and trying with the U.S.," he said.
- As for testing methods, Lufthansa's four centers offer PCR testing, which detect the virus's genetic material, but it takes several hours to provide results. Antigen tests detect specific proteins in the virus, and results can be provided in less than an hour. Airport wait times are key for airline passengers.
- Lufthansa is planning to move to antigen testing as soon as next month.

Southwest Airlines CEO 'hopeful' on more government aid but hesitant to cut capacity without it

- Southwest Airlines CEO Gary Kelly on Wednesday said he is optimistic that Congress can pass a national coronavirus relief package that includes airline aid despite a monthslong impasse between lawmakers and the White House.
- Even without additional aid Southwest is reluctant to further cut capacity because it could end up causing more pain for the airline, Kelly said.
- "At a point, if we cut our flights too much then we cut a lot of itineraries and the revenue loss accelerates much faster than the cost cuts do," he said. "We have to strike the right balance."
- He said the airline is sticking with capacity cuts of about 40%-45% from a year ago.

United to offer Hawaii-bound passengers coronavirus tests, a possible blueprint for flights abroad

- United plans to offer the tests for Hawaii-bound travelers at San Francisco International Airport as well as a mail-in testing option.
- Airlines are scrambling to figure out how to test passengers effectively to open up routes that are off limits or require long quarantines.
- Passengers will be responsible for payment.
- The results of the molecular tests, which will be administered by GoHealth Urgent Care and Dignity Health, take about 15 minutes. The tests will be conducted in the international terminal, a site the airport announced last month that at first was for airport employees.

UK COVID-19 policy threatens hundreds of thousands of jobs: Ryanair's O'Leary

- Britain risks losing hundreds of thousands of travel and tourism jobs in the coming months unless the government offers proper supports to workers and relaxes travel restrictions, Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary said on Thursday.
- O'Leary, group chief executive of Europe's largest low-cost carrier, was speaking hours ahead of the announcement of new UK COVID-19 support measures and weeks ahead of the launch of a European Union plan to coordinate travel restrictions in Europe.
- Failure join the EU plan and provide a proper furlough scheme to pay those whose work has dried up due to COVID-19 "will mean literally hundreds of thousands of job losses this winter," O'Leary said.
- O'Leary said if there was no "proper" replacement, staff not required would be put on unpaid leave. Job losses cannot be ruled out, but Ryanair is "desperately working with our people to prevent them," he said.
- O'Leary also called for the scrapping of the United Kingdom's air passenger tax for 12-24 months.
- The EU travel scheme, due to be finalized in mid-October, would set out common COVID-19 travel rules across the continent and impose restrictions on regions with high COVID-19 rates rather than countries.
- O'Leary, who earlier this month described the winter as a "write-off", said Ryanair's forward bookings for November and December are around 10%, around a quarter of the normal level for this time of year.